THE FUTURE OF GAS.

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THE prospects for a gas millenium are better than ever before, the stockholder may placidly contemplate the advance of electricity and wink his dexter eye at the agitator who forecasts his financial ruin. There is a mission for gas and a "long felt want" it can with dignity supply.

It is mortifying, no doubt, to resign its position as chief competitor of the Sun and fall back into second place. There is a long record of just such incidents, candles succeeded to the brilliancy of the lamp, this in its turn disappeared before the grandeur of gas, and soon gas itself falls a victim to the march of improvement and sees the electric light throw its own little flicker into the shade.

And yet as I have said the future of gas is full of promise.

But not as an illuminating agent.

In evidence of the vitality of gas statistics make the strongest argument. Its consumption, in volume, has increased 35 per cent since the introduction of the electric light. Two new companies have been started right here in New York City, their production amounting to two thousand million feet per year, and they as well as all the old companies are running to their full capacity, grinding out gas and bills for consuming and paying thousands.

Means for using gas, avenues for its utilization aside from illuminating, have developed themselves that were either unknown or disregarded heretofore. Heating, cooking, propeling or supplying power for the numerous engines especially designed to the application of other material fuel, the working of all manner of machinery, these and other essentials in domestic and manufacturing economy are today being extensively and satisfactorily tested.

The time will unquestionably arrive when ashes will be done away, when rugs may be spared the destructive sprinkling of the insidious refuse of consumed coal, when furniture will be no longer battered by the sharp corners of a wandering coal scuttle dangling from the hand of a half crazy girl. Grate fires with all their brightness, their cheerfulness, their warmth, will be in our rooms; stoves with their large radiating surface and their facilities for heating a social toddy, with their clumsy and ill-shapen outlines even, will still be with us, but the dirt, the bother, the smoke, the scarcity of draft and the over supply of it, all that shall be done away with, the fire will be lighted without the preliminary of wood and paper and blasphemy.

Gas makes a clean fire and a quick one, the necessity of a preparatory half hour of shiver is dispensed with, the impalpable essence is turned on, the match applied and the human form divine may leap from the bed and stand within the effulgence of the grateful blaze and robe itself with a maximum of comfort. Sparring with coal cart conductors as to the market price of carrying a ton into the cellar, will be a thing of the past, that relic of barbarism and a debased age, arising at daybreak so as to get breakfast ready, will no longer be a part of the housekeeper's duty, and the loss of the morning paper will not be deplored, for it will never have to be used in starting the fire.

There will be an era of bliss without blisters, and the maiden who officiates in the kitchen can give the required time to her matutinal toilet.

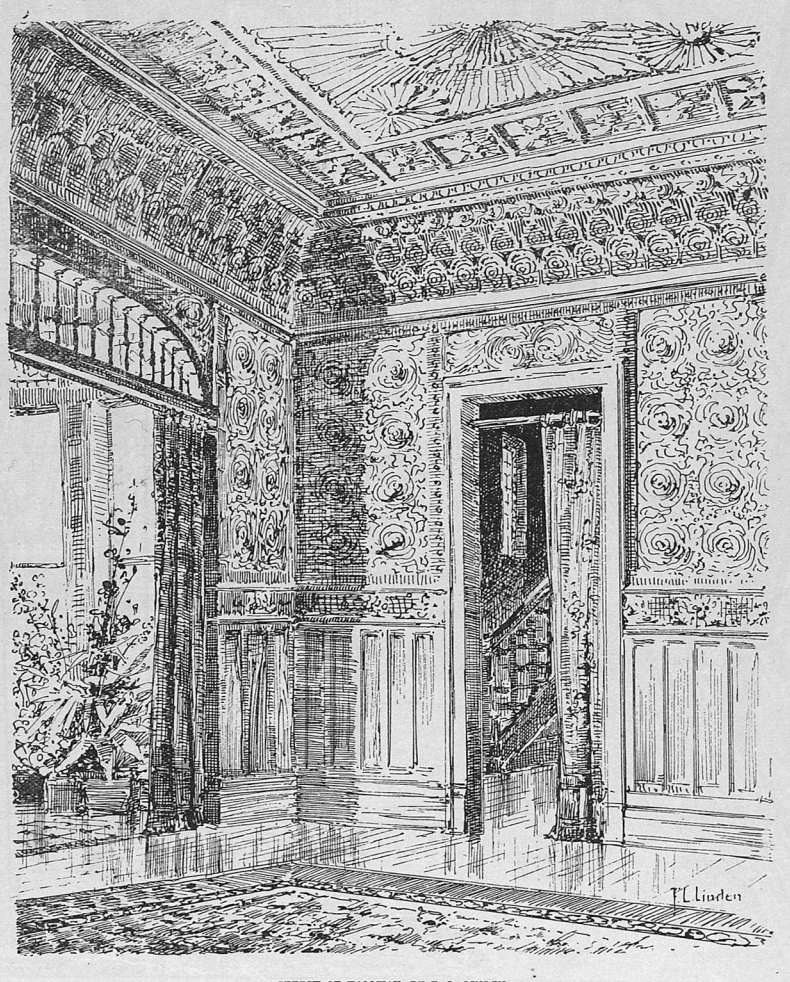
This will be the home side of the gain; in business establishments it will be as it is now in Brewster's carriage factory and Tiffany's establishment, where the heating and in part the motive power is furnished by gas. The first named of these two gentlemen informed me that it saves him about 40 per cent on his former outlay per year for coal and wood and coke.

The popular adoption of the electric light has had an invigorating and healthy influence upon gas inasmuch as it has accustomed the people to an affluence of brightness causing them to demand from their chandeliers and brackets a radiance that would not be too sudden transition from the glare of the street without. Probably the loud complaints against gas and the frequent assertion of its accumulating inferiority with each day, and the miserable light it is said to give, arise from the unconscious and unjust comparison made between it and the blinding white spark that shines like the day in at the windows.

That there are any proper grounds for finding fault would hardly seem reasonable, for while the average candle power of gas a few years since was 16, it is now 25 and even as high as 30. The companies produce a better quality and at a considerable lower price than heretofore; being cheaper, the people use more of it, and the advantages thus are equally divided between the makers of it and its consumers.

With this outlook it seems as though gas will be able to hold a certain position even as an illuminating agent, its cost will necessarily be less than electricity and just as many to this day select lamps and oil on economical grounds, so others with the same reasons for curtailing expense will adhere to gas.

Having this in view the gas companies are making improvements steadily looking toward two ends, a reduction in price and an advance in power. Bearing upon this latter object there has been a new burner recently introduced in Vienna which will shortly make its appearance in this country, it is expected.



SKETCH OF HALLWAY, BY F. L. LINDEN.

The burner will produce a better light than any thus far in use and it is even claimed that its effects will in some degree rival the ordinary electric lamp.

The principal feature of this new burner is the introduction of Tirconium, a mineral chemically treated, which is raised to a white heat when in contact with the flame and radiates in a diminutive sunburst. If all that is claimed for this light be carried out it will prove a valuable medium priced addition to the house.

The elimination of injurious parts to gas has never been succesfully accomplished, the sulphurous component, carbonic oxyde and other poisonous features remain to disturb its possible odorous perfection and smother the country visitor.

Heating gas increases its luminous quality to an appreciable degree. A solid substance may be introduced in the flame which will tend to magnify it. This is practically done in the Vienna burner I have called attention to.

The use of carbon of course very materially improves gas, but it makes an increased cost that puts its use to any considerable extent beyond the reach of advisability.

Gas may be regulated from the house meter so its greatest lighting power can be obtained, by adjusting the governor to distribute equal pressure upon each jet. In this condition, if the light from a jet is not sufficient, the simple remedy and expedient exists of adding a second jet or substitute the present with a larger one. In the same way, controlled by the adjustment of the meter, the flame is steadied.

The enrichment of gas by adding hydro carbon, is accomplished by passing it through petroleum, naphtha, gasolene and other highly inflammable and explosive products. Aside from the consideration of cost, therefore, this process is impracticable for the reason that it is dangerous, it would affect insurance and endanger property. At one time carburettes were employed, through which the gas passed, but they were soon discarded as failures.

Multitudinous devices and appliances are upon the market for the utilization of this great power and this enormous element to the advantage of mankind. For the simple heating of an apartment or a building, the preparation of a banquet, the propulsion of an engine, the creation of motion in a maze of machinery, the smelting of ore, the realization of esthetic forms in the most delicate glass, the welding of precious metals or the illuminating of whole townships by its mere firing as it bursts and belches from the earth. Gas will always have a place in the ecomony of city life and will aid in the future as in the past to the civilization of the world.